



# Data Points

RESULTS FROM THE 1997 CALIFORNIA WOMEN'S HEALTH SURVEY

Folate [folic acid] is one of the B vitamins that is especially important in the early development of the brain and nervous system. When consumed by pregnant women as part of a multivitamin, folate has been shown to prevent certain birth defects, in particular neural tube defects such as spina bifida. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention [CDC] currently recommends that women who plan to become pregnant take a vitamin containing at least 400 µg per day to ensure an adequate level of folate consumption. To assure this, CDC recommends that all women of childbearing age consume a multivitamin containing 400 µg of folate daily.

The 1997 California Women's Health Survey asked respondents whether they had taken prenatal or multivitamins before their last pregnancy and whether they were currently taking prenatal or multivitamins.

- Current vitamin use was the factor

most closely associated with having taken prenatal vitamins before their last pregnancy.

- More highly educated women were more likely both to take vitamins currently and to have taken prenatal vitamins.
- Black and Hispanic women were less likely than white women and Asian/Other women to be taking vitamins currently or to have taken prenatal vitamins.

The figure shows the appreciable difference between the two groups—women who are currently taking vitamins compared with those who are not. The difference in prenatal vitamin use between the subgroups of women who are not currently taking vitamins is not statistically significant, but the difference between the subgroups of women who currently are taking vitamins is highly significant.

## PRENATAL VITAMIN USAGE

**Genetic Disease Branch**

**Maternal and Child Health Branch**

### Public Health Message:

*Women who take prenatal or multivitamins routinely are more likely to have taken prenatal vitamins or multivitamins prior to their last pregnancy. This supports the recommendation that all women of childbearing age regularly take a multivitamin supplement as the most efficient way to ensure that women who become pregnant receive adequate folate.*

Issue 1, Number 2, Fall 1999  
Second Printing

